

## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Northern District of Alabama

United States of America )

v. )

Derrell Allen Matthews ) Case No.

Mag 23-148

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Defendant(s)*

## CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of April 2, 2023 in the county of Shelby in the  
Northern District of Alabama, the defendant(s) violated:*Code Section**Offense Description*

Title 18 U.S.C. § 1708

Possession of Stolen Mail Matter

Title 18 U.S.C. § 1704

Possession of Stolen Postal Key

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

On April 2, 2023, in Shelby County, Alabama, Derrell Allen Matthews was unlawfully in possession of U.S. mail stolen from collection boxes and a U.S. Postal Service key, which was stolen from the Fairview Heights Station Post Office in Birmingham, Alabama, in violation of 18 USC 1708 and 1704.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.*Complainant's signature*

Montaleta S. Barber, U.S. Postal Inspector

*Printed name and title*

Sworn to me telephonically and signed electronically.

Date: April 4, 2023*Judge's signature*City and state: Birmingham, Alabama

Gray M. Borden, U.S. Magistrate Judge

*Printed name and title*

**AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

I, Montaleto S. Barber, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

**Introduction**

I am the Affiant herein and an investigative and law enforcement officer of the United States within the meaning of Title 18, United States Code, 3061.

I submit this affidavit in support of a criminal complaint and arrest warrant for Derrell Allen Matthews for violations of federal violations described in this affidavit.

**Agent Background**

I am a U.S. Postal Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service and have been since July 12, 2003. I am currently assigned to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service Domicile in Birmingham, Alabama. I am authorized by Title 18, United States Code, Section 3061 to conduct criminal investigations into matters which affect the United States Postal Service. My duties as a U.S. Postal Inspector include investigating suspected mail theft (Title 18 U.S.C. § 1708); mail fraud (Title 18 U.S.C. § 1341); wire fraud (Title 18 U.S.C. § 1343); bank fraud (Title 18 U.S.C. § 1344); conspiracy offenses (Title 18 U.S.C. §§ 371 and 1349); identity theft offenses (Title 18 U.S.C. § 1028); and aggravated identity theft (Title 18 U.S.C. § 1028A), among other crimes. I have received training in a wide variety of crimes, including mail theft, bank fraud, and identity theft.

The facts in this affidavit come from my personal observations, training, and experience, as well as information obtained from other agents, law enforcement officers, and witnesses. I submit my affidavit for the limited purpose of securing a criminal complaint. Thus, I have not included each fact obtained during the investigation or my knowledge of all matters in my investigation, which is ongoing. My affidavit is only intended to establish probable cause that **Derrell Allen Matthews** and other individuals, known and unknown, have violated federal

statutes, including but not limited to Title 18 USC § 1704 (keys or locks stolen or reproduced) and 18 U.S.C. § 1708 (theft or receipt of stolen mail matter), in the Northern District of Alabama.

### **Probable Cause**

Over the past 12 months, postal inspectors in North Alabama have been investigating a series of mail thefts and postal carrier robberies. In the mail thefts, the suspects have often used stolen or illegally obtained “Arrow Keys” to access the locks on U.S. Postal Service blue collection boxes to steal mail. USPS “Arrow Keys” are unique keys that are used by the U.S. Postal Service, and the U.S. Postal Service alone. These keys should never be outside of the possession of postal employees. They are used to open locks on the backs of collection boxes, apartment complex boxes, and other mail receptacles used by the U.S. Postal Service. In recent years, these “Arrow Keys” have become the targets of fraud groups across the southeast United States because of the unfettered access it allows criminals to have and use to steal large quantities of U.S. mail. Our recent investigations have revealed that this initial stage of mail theft is the beginning of a fraud scheme that often involves the negotiation of stolen checks at FDIC insured financial institutions and sometimes involves identity theft in furtherance of those schemes. The mail thefts using the “Arrow Keys” have taken place across multiple locations in the metropolitan Birmingham area, to include the U.S. Post Office located in Hoover, Alabama on Riverchase Drive and the Meadowbrook Post Office located on Corporate Drive in Birmingham, Alabama.

In late August 2022, the U.S. Postal Service blue collection boxes at the Hoover, Alabama Post Office were being unlawfully accessed and mail was being stolen. Video surveillance at the post office showed a red Dodge Charger was used in the theft. A subject was

seen exiting the red Charger and using a key to access the back panel of the blue collection boxes. Multiple items of U.S. mail were stolen out of the boxes and the red Charger left the area. In the photograph below, the red Charger can be seen parked at the collection boxes as the mail theft occurred.

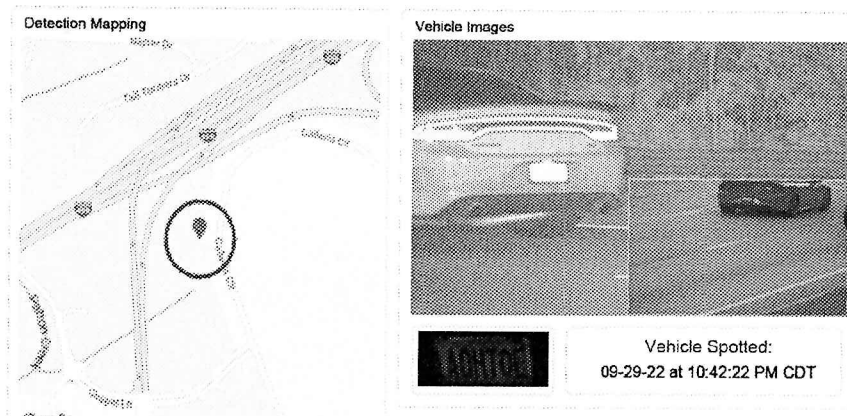


Subsequent mail thefts occurred on or about September 20, 2022, and September 29, 2022, at the blue collection boxes at the Hoover, Alabama Post Office. What appears to be the same red Dodge Charger was seen arriving on surveillance video at the boxes. A suspect would exit the passenger's side of the vehicle and use an "Arrow Key" to access the rear panel of the blue collection boxes.

Following the mail theft that occurred on September 29 2022, postal inspectors spoke with Hoover Police officers about cameras that may have been in use near the Hoover, Alabama Post Office at the time of the mail theft. Hoover Police were able to locate an image of the red Dodge Charger as it left the area of the Post Office. Hoover Police traffic cameras installed on Galleria Drive near the Hoover Post Office captured an image of the red Dodge Charger, which revealed an image of the license plate displayed on the red Dodge Charger. That image, and the



license plate number are shown below, along with a daytime image of the same vehicle for comparison purposes. The tag captured by Hoover Police cameras was 1A0HT0E. The capture of this tag took place just a few minutes after the mail theft attack at Hoover, Alabama Post Office on September 29, 2022.



Postal inspectors obtained the vehicle registration for tag 1A0HT0E. That vehicle, a 2021 red Dodge Charger, was registered to Derrell Allen Matthews of Birmingham, Alabama. Postal inspectors conducted a public records database search on Matthews and determined he lived at a street address of 5825 31<sup>st</sup> Street North, Birmingham, Alabama 35207. Postal inspectors determined that Derrell Matthews is not an employee of the U.S. Postal Service and is not authorized to have a U.S. Postal Service “Arrow Key”, nor is he authorized to remove mail from blue collection boxes.

On or about October 19, 2022, postal inspectors executed a federal search warrant (Mag 22-484) on Matthew’s residence located at 5825 31<sup>st</sup> Street North, Birmingham, Alabama 35207. Among the items recovered from Matthews’ residence were stolen U.S. mail, stolen checks, counterfeit checks, blank check stock, a printer, and a U.S. Postal Service “Arrow Key” bearing serial number 271-81710. This number matches the serial number of an “Arrow Key” reported

lost by the Fairview Heights Station Post Office in Birmingham, Alabama on or about August 10, 2022.

In the meantime, postal inspectors continued the investigation of Matthews to determine how he came into possession of the “arrow key.” Postal inspectors obtained a federal search warrant (MAG 22-501) for the Facebook account of Derrell Matthews. A review of Matthews’ Facebook account found conversations between Matthews, who identifies himself as Rackz Out, and an individual named Ke’Aundria Gresham. The conversation centered around fraud by using FDIC insured banks; however, a specific part of the conversation discussed Gresham acquiring a key for Matthews. On or about July 23, 2022, Gresham asked for \$6K (\$6,000). As the conversation continued, postal inspectors determined Gresham was referring to an “Arrow Key.” Gresham made statements like “It’s worldwide its worth too much plus I’m risking my job.” Matthews continued to ask to see the key because he was aware that it will only work in Birmingham, but Gresham insisted it would work anywhere. Matthews and Gresham appeared to settle on a price of \$3K (\$3,000). Postal inspectors verified that Ke’Aundria Gresham is a letter carrier employed by the U.S. Postal Service, and she is currently assigned to the Fairview Heights Station in Birmingham, Alabama. Because Gresham is a letter carrier, she would have access to U.S. Postal Service “Arrow Keys.”

The conversation between Matthews and Gresham coincides with postal inspectors receiving a report from the Fairview Heights Station Post Office about a lost arrow key. This also coincides with the timeframe postal inspectors first observed Matthews’ red Dodge Charger at the Hoover collection boxes while individuals were stealing mail.

On or about October 24, 2022, just a few days after the search of his residence, Matthews reached out to Gresham via Facebook. On or about October 27, 2022, Matthews offered to buy

another key from Gresham. Gresham asked for \$3K (\$3,000) and refused to go any lower. On or about November 1, 2022, the Gresham let Matthews know that she got the key, and they discussed how and when they were going to meet.

The conversation between Matthews and Gresham coincides with postal inspectors receiving a report of a lost "Arrow Key" from the Fairview Height Station Post Office. This also coincides with the timeframe postal inspectors began receiving complaints from postal customers at Meadowbrook Post Office about mail being stolen from the blue collection boxes.

In November 2022, postal inspectors began getting multiple reports of mail theft from the blue collection boxes at the Meadowbrook Post Office, located at 1900 Corporate Drive, Birmingham, Alabama. Postal customers were reporting they were depositing their mail into the blue collection boxes; however, the mail was not reaching its intended destination and personal and/or business checks were being altered and deposited into accounts of person(s) unknown to them.

On or about January 1, 2023, postal inspectors received a sensor alert that someone was accessing one of the collection boxes at the Meadowbrook Post Office. Postal inspectors reviewed the surveillance and observed a red Dodge Charger parked next to the collection boxes and an unidentified individual in a dark colored hoodie next to the red Dodge Charger. The red Dodge Charger was a vehicle similar in make, model, and color to that of Derrell Matthews.

On April 2, 2023, postal inspectors, along with Shelby County Sheriff's deputies conducted surveillance at the Meadowbrook Post Office. At approximately 10:41 pm, a light-colored sedan stopped at the collection boxes. An individual exited the left rear passenger door and ran around the front of the vehicle to the blue collection boxes. The subject used a key to open a collection box, removed the white postal tub containing the mail, and dumped the mail

into the front seat of the light-colored sedan. The subject then opened a second blue collection box and dumps that mail into the front seat of the light-colored sedan.

I was able to observe the movement and direction of the vehicle. I notified the postal inspectors and Shelby County deputies of the activity I observed. I then provided a direction of travel for the suspect vehicle. Postal inspectors and Shelby County deputies responded to the area, activated their emergency lights and sirens, and conducted a traffic stop on the suspect vehicle.

Both subjects were removed from the vehicle and taken into custody without further incident. One subject was identified as Derrell Allen Matthews of Birmingham, Alabama. The other subject was identified as Steven C. Hudson, Jr., also from Birmingham, Alabama. Officers were able to see white garbage bags on the front and rear floor of the vehicle that contained large amounts of U.S. mail. Due to stolen mail being in plain sight and based on the criminal activity I observed, postal inspectors conducted a search of the vehicle. Postal inspectors recovered stolen U.S. mail, a black mask, and a stolen U.S. Postal Service "Arrow Key" bearing serial number 271-81711. This number matches the serial number of an "Arrow Key" reported lost by the Fairview Heights Station Post Office in Birmingham, Alabama on or about November 1, 2022.

On April 2, 2022, Shelby County Deputies charged Derrell Matthews with possessing burglar tools (SCSO case #202302215). Matthews was transported to the Shelby County Jail in Columbiana, Alabama. Matthews currently has a \$5,000 bond.



In conclusion, I believe probable cause exists that Derrell Allen Matthews and other individuals, known and unknown, have violated 18 U.S.C. §§ 1704, 1708, and other federal statutes in the Northern District of Alabama.

Dated April 4, 2023.



Montaleto S. Barber  
Postal Inspector  
U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Sworn to telephonically and signed electronically this 4<sup>th</sup> day of April 2023.



Gray M. Borden  
United States Magistrate Judge